

Supervisor Quick Guide

Welcoming and Supporting a Member/Employee Returning to Work (RTW)

Bottom line for busy leaders

A welcoming, structured Day 1, respectful communication, and quick, small adjustments **save time, reduce risk**, and keep schools running smoothly. Your visible leadership is the fastest path to a safe, confident, and sustainable return—for the employee, the team, and students.

1. Make Day 1 a Positive Experience

Purpose: Lower stress, set a supportive tone, ensure safety.

Why it matters (for busy leaders):

- Prevents setbacks and rework.
- Saves time all week (fewer hallway questions and fixes).
- Protects students/safety in sensitive settings.
- Signals culture from the top; dampens rumor-mill noise.

Do this (10–15 minutes total):

- **Ensure the workplace is ready for your employee:** keys/ID, logins, email, desk/room, accommodations/equipment.
- **Greet personally:** “We’re glad you’re back.”
- **Clarify essentials of the RTW plan:** start time, location, first task, breaks, who to contact.
- **Day 1:** manageable tasks; no last-minute changes.
- **Protect privacy:** keep it work-focused (duties/supports, not diagnoses).
- **Normalize the RTW:** this is reintegration into a valued role—not an exception or favouritism.
- **Set two check-ins:** mid-shift and end-of-day.

Suggested Talking Point:

“Welcome back, **[Name]**. We’re pleased to have you returning. The workspace and duties are prepared in line with the RTW plan. Let’s walk through the plan together to confirm it feels clear. If anything becomes difficult, please contact me. We’ll have a short check-in mid-day and another before you go.”

2. Monitor the RTW Plan Successfully

Purpose: Keep the plan safe, aligned, and adaptable.

Why it matters:

- Reduces risk (duties match restrictions).
- Maintains momentum (small, timely adjustments).
- Improves staffing stability; fewer re-absences.
- Ensures accountability with light documentation.

Do this (quick, high-impact):

- **Know the plan:** hours, duties, restrictions, equipment.
- **Schedule check-ins:** Day 1, end of Week 1, end of Week 2, then monthly.
- **Watch for mismatch:** off-plan tasks, missing equipment, fatigue/anxiety spikes, safety issues.
- **Adjust early:** swap tasks, pace work, add micro-breaks; confirm with HR/Desjardins.
- **Coordinate fast:** loop HR/Desjardins/Union if barriers persist—don't let issues persist.
- **Document briefly:** date → observation → adjustment → next review.
- **Reinforce wins:** name small successes to build confidence.

Suggested Talking Points:

"What went well? What felt difficult? Let's try **[specific adjustment]** starting **[date]** and review on **[date]**."

"Nice work this week. You've kept things manageable and steady. That's exactly what helps a return succeed."

Quick example: Custodian with lifting limits had ladder work creep back in; supervisor reassigns ladders, adds weekly 10-min reviews → no flare-ups and safe workload increase by Week 3.

Lesson: Early, small adjustments + quick HR coordination prevent re-injury and schedule disruptions.

3. Foster Peer Support

Purpose: Create a respectful, inclusive team climate.

Why it matters:

- Stops problems before they start (team follows your lead).
- Improves retention and morale for everyone.
- Protects privacy in school environments.
- Speeds up contribution and continuity for classrooms/operations.

Do this (leader actions):

- **Set the tone:** have a brief team meeting (see talking points below).
- **Provide guidance:** circulate the [“How to Welcome a Co-Worker Back”](#).
- **Model language:**
 - Say: “Welcome back—need anything to get started?”
 - Avoid: “What happened to you?” or medical advice/comparisons.
- **Monitor the climate:** intercept gossip/probing/exclusion early, privately.
- **Recognize positives:** thank co-workers who are inclusive and keep it professional.

Suggested Talking Points:

“We’re really glad **[Name]** is back. Please welcome them warmly and keep questions work-related. Come to me with duty/scheduling items.”

“I want to recognize you, **[Name]**, for the way you’ve been supporting your colleague’s return — including them in the day-to-day, redirecting tasks to me when needed, and keeping conversations work-focused. Your approach is making a real difference. Thank you.”

Red Flags — Act Promptly

- **Safety or symptom flare** affecting task performance.
- **Accommodation drift:** equipment missing, increased hours/duties, inconsistent application of accommodations.
- **Negative team behaviour:** gossip, probing questions, exclusion.

Action: pause/adjust tasks → consult HR/Health Care Management Specialist (HCMS) → document what changed → set an earlier review date.